DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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(429)

Q: How many AWACS would be required for full border coverage of Saudi Arabia 24 hours/day? How much will 5 AWACS provide? Does the U.S. Government see any current need for more than 5?

A: Providing full border coverage of Saudi Arabia with AWACS, 24 hours per day, would be prohibitively costly in equipment and manpower required, would be operationally unrealistic, and would be militarily unnecessary. A prudent and realistic approach would be to have the intelligence system, a base-line ground radar system, and periodic AWACS patrols provide peace-time surveillance and the initial indication of a threat axis.

A specific AWACS orbit would then be established to provide the necessary crisis/wartime coverage. Five E-3As would be capable of providing continuous (24 hours per day) wartime coverage of a single 300 mile front along the Saudi border for a period of seven days. Any coverage of this front for longer than seven days would require additional aircraft. Any additional 300 mile area of the border would require five additional E-3As each for a seven day period of continuous coverage. After seven days, augmentation from the U.S. or elsewhere could be in place in Saudi Arabia, if the situation warranted.